Favourite

Bible Stories FOR THE Young

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Vida A. Etherington
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To Ida Hetherington

On Christmas

From her

mother

1894

ELIJAH FED BY THE RAVENS

Page 85

FAVOURITE
BIBLE STORIES

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THOMAS NELSON AND SONS
London, Edinburgh, and New York

FAVOURITE BIBLE STORIES

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WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS

THOMAS NELSON AND SONS
London, Edinburgh, and New York

1896

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FAVOURITE BIBLE STORIES.

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STORY OF THE FLOOD.

LONG, long ago, when the world, though young, began to be more fully peopled, men became so wicked that God resolved to destroy them from off the face of the earth.

Among those evil ones, however, there was one good man, named Noah. Him God resolved to save, with his family, when he destroyed the rest of the race. So God told him that for the wickedness of mankind he was about to destroy them with a flood —them, and all living creatures, save those whom he had appointed to save with Noah, in order to continue the race of living creatures afterwards.

Then he bade Noah make an ark—that is, a sort of boat—into which he and his family should be shut up during the flood, that their lives, and the lives of those with them, might be preserved.

Noah did as God had ordered, and built the ark according to the directions for it that God had given him. It was long in building; for God had given full warning of what he meant to do, in order to afford time for repentance. During the hundred and twenty years that God thus spared mankind, Noah sought to turn them from their evil ways. But it was in vain. They did not believe him; or rather they did not believe God, whose word he made known to them.

At length the time came at which God had said that he would bring the flood upon the earth.

Noah, with his wife, and his three sons with their wives, went into the ark. He took with him those living creatures which God purposed to spare, and also food for them and for his family. When they were all safely shut in, God, it is said, opened the windows of heaven and poured down a deluge of rain, which continued forty days; while floods of water issued from the great deep.

The waters rose higher and higher, bearing up the ark on their surface, until even the high hills were covered, and everything that had breath upon the earth, both man and beast, perished.

None were left in the whole world but those eight persons, who, believing God, were sheltered in the ark.

For a hundred and fifty days—that is, nearly half a year—the earth remained utterly covered by the waters of this flood.

THE FLOOD.

Then they began to abate, sinking lower and lower until the ark rested upon the mountains of Ararat in Armenia. Still they continued sinking. One hill-top

after another came in sight. At length Noah, opening the window of the ark, sent forth first a raven and then a dove, that he might know whether the dry land had appeared, so that he and his might come out of the ark.

The raven did not return; but the dove, finding no resting-place on account of the waters, returned to the

THE DOVE RETURNING TO THE ARK.

ark, and Noah took the poor weary bird in to him again. Seven days afterwards he sent her forth a second time. She flew about, rejoicing to use her free wings in the open air, until the evening, when she came back with an olive leaf in her mouth, which she

had just plucked. By that Noah knew that the flood of water was disappearing from off the earth.

Other seven days passed, and he sent her forth again. But she never returned, for the waters were now quite dried up from off the earth.

NOAH AND HIS FAMILY COMING OUT OF THE ARK.

Looking forth, Noah saw that the ground was dry; and God himself then commanded him to come out of the ark, with his wife, and his children, and all the multitude of beasts, birds, and other living creatures that were with him, that they might spread themselves

abroad over the earth, which they were again to people and replenish.

So Noah and all those with him came rejoicing out of the ark, in which they had been so long confined (a whole year), amid the dreary wilderness of waters all around. In token of worship and thanksgiving, Noah built an altar, and offered upon it a sacrifice to God.

God was well pleased with Noah, and solemnly blessed him and his sons, and the whole race of mankind who should afterwards spring from them.

And God bade Noah look upon the rainbow, telling him that it should be a sign unto him, and to all after him, that God would never again destroy the earth with a flood.

So, when we look upon that beautiful bow in the clouds we feel assured that God will not again destroy the earth with a deluge of water; and that seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall go on continuously as long as time itself shall last.

HAGAR AND ISHMAEL.

SOMETIMES God told Abraham what he was going to do, and directed Abraham what he ought to do.

Sarah said unto Abraham, "Send away this servant Hagar and her son Ishmael; for the son of this slave shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac." But Abraham did not wish to send them away; for he loved Ishmael.

God knew how very sad it made Abraham to think of parting with his son, and so he said, "Do not grieve because of the lad, and because of his mother: in all that Sarah has said to you, hearken unto her voice; for all the great blessings I have promised you will come to you through Isaac and his children. And Ishmael also will I bless, because he is your son."

As soon as Abraham knew that it was God's will that Hagar and her boy should be sent away, he did

not hesitate a moment longer. He rose up early in the morning, and took some bread and a bottle of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder; then he sent her away, and Ishmael also. It was a sorrowful parting. Hagar was now turned out of a home where she had lived for a great many years; and her boy, who she had hoped would one day have been his father's heir, was turned out too. If they had behaved well, this would never have happened; but both Hagar and her boy had proud and fiery tempers, and that was the cause of all the trouble that came upon them. Abraham, though he was so obedient to God's word, must have had many sad thoughts that early morning as he watched them turning away from his tent door. He would grieve that his son's misconduct had brought this distress upon him and his mother; yet he would feel comfort in remembering God's promise that he would bless the lad for his sake. Hagar was intending to return to Egypt, which had been her home before she became Sarah's servant. But she lost her way, and wandered about in the wilderness, not knowing in which direction to go. It was very hot, and the water in the bottle was soon gone. They looked about for some well or running stream, but they could not find any; and at last Ishmael became so weary and tired, and faint from

thirst, that his mother feared he was at the point of death. She took him up in her arms, and carried him to a shrub or small tree that was growing near, and laid him gently down in the shade. Then she went away from him a little distance, for she could not bear to see him die. She said, "Let me not see the death of the child." And she sat down, and lifted up her voice and wept. She was very unhappy; but she did not pray to God to help her, and she seemed quite to forget how he had spoken to her and comforted her many years before, in another wilderness, when she was lonely and sad. She seemed quite to forget, also, the meaning of her boy's name, and the promise there was in it, "God will hear."

But Ishmael cried to God, and God heard him. For Abraham had taught his son to worship God and to pray to him; and now, in his great need, he remembered his father's teaching.

And the Angel of the Covenant, Jesus, who had spoken to Hagar before, called to her again out of heaven and said unto her, "What is the matter with you, Hagar? Fear not; for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him in your arms; for I will make him a great nation." Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water. This was a most joyful sight. She

HAGAR AND ISHMAEL AT THE WELL.

ran to the well and filled her bottle with cool, delicious water, and gave it to her boy; and he drank, and felt refreshed and strong again.

The Bible tells us nothing more about Hagar, except that some years afterwards she took a wife for her son out of the land of Egypt.

And God was with Ishmael. He never forgets his promises; and so he never forgot that he had told Abraham he would bless the lad for his father's sake. And Ishmael grew, and dwelt in the wilderness of Paran, and became an archer. An archer is one who is skilful, or clever, in the use of a bow and arrows. He was a wild man. His hand was against every man, and every man's hand was against him; which means, that he did not live peaceably with his neighbours. But God prospered him, and gave him twelve sons, who were all princes and great men; and in after years the family of Ishmael became a great and powerful nation, as God had promised.

LOT FLEEING FROM SODOM.

THE people of Sodom, where Lot, the nephew of Abraham, dwelt, were very wicked. There were not even ten righteous men in the city to save it from the destruction which God had determined to bring upon it. Abraham, to whom God had made known what he was about to do, pleaded hard that the sinful city might be spared. First he prayed that if fifty righteous men were found in it God would spare it for the sake of that fifty. And God said that if there were fifty, then he would spare all the place for their sake. Then Abraham prayed that if there should lack five of that fifty it still should be spared. And God said that if he found there forty and five he would not destroy it. And so Abraham continued praying, and God continued granting his requests, until when God had promised that he would spare it even for the sake of ten righteous men, if they could be found in it, Abraham left off praying. For who could have

thought that there should not be ten righteous men even in the vilest city on the face of the earth! On the evening of that very day, as Lot was sitting in the gate of the city, he saw two angels, in the likeness of men, approaching Sodom. He did not know that they were angels. He thought they were only two weary travellers. So he went to meet them, and with all courtesy and kindliness prayed them to come into his house for rest and food; and early the next morning they should go on their way. They said no; they would remain out all night. In those warm Eastern countries to camp out all night is no hardship. But Lot would not suffer this. At last he prevailed upon them to come in and eat with him, and spend the night in his house. Then, as they sat, they asked if he had any of his family in that place—sons, daughters, or sons-in-law—because, if he had, he must at once get them out of it, as God was about to destroy the city for its extreme wickedness. Upon hearing this, Lot hastened to warn his sons-in-law, saying, "Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city." But they gave no heed to him. Then the angels bade him speed away for his life, with his wife and his two daughters who were with him, otherwise they should certainly be destroyed with the rest.

And while Lot lingered, they laid hold of him and

of his wife and daughters by the hand, and brought them out of the city, bidding them all escape in haste to the mountain, nor even look behind them, lest they

LOT AND HIS DAUGHTERS FLEEING FROM SODOM.

should be destroyed. But Lot hung back, disheartened by the difficulties before him, and prayed the angel that he might find refuge in a small city near at hand,

instead of on the distant mountain, where he feared some evil might befall him. The angel granted his request, and bade him hasten to that city (which should be spared for his sake); for he could not do anything till Lot was in safety.

Then the Lord rained down fire and brimstone from heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah, and upon the other wicked cities of the fertile plain of Jordan, and destroyed them utterly, so that no trace of them remained to show where those sinners had dwelt. Theirs was a terrible fate. Abraham, rising up early that morning, and looking toward the cities of the plain, saw the smoke of them rising up to heaven, as if it had been the smoke of a furnace! So Lot escaped, because he was obedient to the angel whom God had sent to save him. But his wife, heedless of the command not to look behind as they fled, turned toward the city they were forsaking, and perished in her sin, for we are told that she became a pillar of salt.

We do not know exactly what this "pillar of salt" means. Nor is it needful, seeing that we well understand the lesson it is meant to teach us: that disobedience to God is a great sin, for which time of repentance is not always given to evil-doers.

ELIEZER AND REBEKAH AT THE WELL.

ABRAHAM, in his old age, wished that his son Isaac, who was then about forty years old, should be married. The Canaanites, among whom he lived, were idolaters, so that it was not fit that Isaac should take one of them for a wife. Abraham therefore bade Eliezer, the eldest servant of his house—that is what we should call his steward—go into Mesopotamia, Abraham's own country, whence by God's command he had come out, and choose a wife for Isaac from among his relations there. Eliezer was afraid that the person whom he should choose for Isaac's wife might be unwilling to follow him, a stranger, into a strange land. He therefore asked whether he might take Isaac to her country. But Abraham absolutely forbade the removal of Isaac to Mesopotamia. He must remain in the land of Canaan, which God had sworn to give unto Abraham and his

descendants. Abraham also told Eliezer that he believed God would give him good success in his errand. But, even if it were not so, Isaac must on no account return to his father's native country.

Eliezer then solemnly vowed to obey Abraham's commands in this business. Taking with him ten camels, which were used both for riding and for carrying burdens, he set out on his journey.

After a time he came into Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor, Abraham's brother. Outside the city, near a well of water, he halted his little troop. It was at the time of the evening, when the women of the place went out to draw water. Then this good man, who knew that it is God himself who orders all the events of our life, prayed to him to direct him in the important business which he had in hand. His prayer was that the damsel whom God had chosen to be Isaac's wife, should, when Eliezer asked water for himself to drink, offer to draw for his camels also.

While he was yet praying, the women came out as usual to draw water. Among them was Rebekah, Nahor's grand-daughter, with her pitcher upon her shoulder, according to the custom of the country. As she came up from the well, after having filled her pitcher, Eliezer begged her to give him a little water to drink. Rebekah gave it to him readily; and then

said that she would draw water for the camels, hastily emptying the pitcher into the trough and running for more until they were all supplied. The man stood

ELIEZER AND REBEKAH AT THE WELL.

watching her in silent wonder; it was so exactly as he had prayed God that it might be.

Taking ornaments of gold which he had brought with him,—ear-rings and bracelets,—he put them upon

her, asking whose daughter she was, and whether there was room in her father's house for him and his servants to lodge. Rebekah told him that she was Nahor's grand-daughter, and bade him welcome to her father's house. Then Eliezer devoutly thanked God, who had brought him among Abraham's own kindred, and chosen from them a wife for Isaac. When he came into the house he would neither eat nor drink until he had told his errand, and how he had prayed God to go before and further him in the business he came about.

Eliezer's proposal was very agreeable to the family of Rebekah. It came from their own kindred; and the people of those countries then, as now, preferred marrying among their relations. Rebekah, however, was to have her choice in the matter; and when she had consented, her father willingly gave her to be Isaac's wife. So she returned with Eliezer to the land of Canaan, and married Isaac, who loved her tenderly.

JACOB'S DREAM.

NOW Jacob and Esau were the sons of Isaac and Rebekah. They were twins, and Esau was the older; but by a trick Rebekah got Isaac to give his chief blessing to Jacob, her favourite son. Esau was filled with wrath, and Jacob was obliged to flee. As he was on his journey he came to a place where he resolved to stay for the night. He took a stone for his pillow and lay down to sleep. While he slept he had a dream. In his dream he saw a ladder reaching from the earth to heaven, and the angels of God were coming down to the earth and going up again to heaven on this ladder. And above it the Lord stood and said, "I am the Lord God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac. The land upon which you are lying I will give to you and to your children. And your children shall be like the dust of the earth, and shall spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south. And in you and in

your children shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And I am with you, and will keep you where you are going, and bring you again into this land; for

JACOB'S DREAM.

I will not leave you until I have done that which I have spoken to you of."

When Jacob awakened out of his sleep, he said,

"Surely God is in this place, and I knew it not." And he was afraid, and said, "How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the house of God; and this is the gate of heaven."

When he remembered that God's eye was upon him, and that the very thoughts of his heart were known to God, he did not at first feel happy. But he did the very best thing that people can do when they find they have been going wrong: he repented—that is, he changed his mode of life. He took the stones on which he had been lying, and raised a pillar to mark the place where God had spoken to him. He called the place Beth-el, which means *the house of God*. He then resumed his journey.

STORIES FROM THE LIFE OF MOSES.

THE children of Israel set out to go from Egypt into the land where their father Abraham had lived many years before—the land which God told Abraham should yet be given to his family. God showed them the way to go. They were led first to the shore of the Red Sea, and they encamped there. Pharaoh had begun to be sorry for having sent all those clever workmen away. When he heard that they were encamped by the Red Sea, he thought that he could soon make them come back. He said, "They cannot cross the water, for they have no boats; and if I come upon them suddenly with chariots and horsemen, they will not have time to go round by the head of the sea, so they will have to come back with me."

He therefore got together a great army, with chariots and horsemen, and followed after the children of Israel. When the Israelites saw them in the distance they were sore afraid, for the water lay before them, and

they saw no way of escape. They said to Moses, "Why have you brought us out here? We did not wish to come. Were there not graves enough in Egypt, that you have brought us here to die?"

Then Moses cried to God. And God said to him, "Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward: but lift you up your rod and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it." Moses therefore said to the people, "Fear not: the Egyptians whom you have seen to-day, you shall see no more again for ever." Moses then stretched out his hand over the sea; and God caused it to go back by a strong east wind all that night. And the children of Israel went through upon dry land.

There was a dry sandy path made for the children of Israel between the two waters, and the Egyptians could not come near them on the right hand or on the left. When they tried to follow them by that path through the midst of the waters, God troubled the great army of the Egyptians, and made their chariot wheels to go heavily, so that they said, "Let us return, for the Lord fights for Israel against the Egyptians."

In the morning, when all the children of Israel had got to the other side of the sea, God said to Moses, "Stretch forth your hand again over the sea." Moses did so, and the sea returned to its former place.

The Egyptians fled from it; but the waters returned and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh that came into the sea. That day the children of Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore. Now they believed the Lord and his servant Moses. Then Moses and all the men sang

DESTRUCTION OF PHARAOH AND HIS HOST IN THE RED SEA.

joyfully together a beautiful song of triumph which he taught them. The women also took up the burden of the song, saying, "Sing ye to the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea." And they played on timbrels, and danced in time to the music as they sang.

This joyous state, however, did not last very long. They had still a long journey to take through the lonely wilderness; and as soon as ever they felt the want of anything, they seemed to forget that God was taking care of them, and that He who had brought them through the Red Sea would also supply all their wants. Instead of asking God for what they wanted, they turned on Moses, and said that he had brought them into the wilderness to die. And sometimes they were ready to tear him in pieces. But Moses had great patience with them. He told all his troubles to God, and the Lord never failed to give all that was wanting for the support of this great family in the wilderness.

The children of Israel stayed in the wilderness for forty years, stopping sometimes for a good while at one place and then removing to another; and all that time God took care of them. He never ceased to teach them; but, as you have seen, they were slow to learn, and their hearts were stubborn, therefore God sometimes taught them by terrible punishments.

Once when they had to leave a place where they had been staying for some time, and to go off on a journey through a dry, dreary part of the wilderness, they began to grumble after their usual fashion, and to take up their old cry—"Why did you bring us out

of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is neither water nor bread in this place." Then God sent among

THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

them small poisonous serpents, whose bite was very painful, and many of the people died, for the bites

burned like fire. In their distress the people said to Moses, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray to the Lord to take away the serpents from us." Moses therefore prayed for the people. And God said, "Make a serpent of brass like those serpents that have bitten the people, and set it upon a pole in the sight of the people; and when any one that is bitten looks upon it, he shall be cured and shall live." Moses did as God commanded, and the people who were bitten were cured when they looked on the serpent of brass.

Long after this time, our Lord Jesus said that as Moses had lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so should he be lifted up, that every one who believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

At last, when those forty years were all but ended, the time came when Moses himself must die. He had been God's faithful servant for many years, and he had been a wise and good ruler over the children of Israel, who, like a great many other people, were often both unreasonable and ungrateful. It was a heavy burden to have the care of them; and we may be sure that Moses could never have borne it all through his long life if he had not told all his troubles to God, and if he had not been a great deal with God, learning sweet

and beautiful lessons from him. This made him wise and gentle and patient. It made his cares and troubles ever so much easier to bear, so that they did not wear him out; for when he was a very old man his eye was still bright, and he had not grown feeble.

Once for a little while Moses lost his quiet trust in God. He lost all patience with the provoking Israelites, and he spoke hasty and unbelieving words. Then God said that because Moses and Aaron had not believed him and honoured him before the people, therefore they should not lead the people into the promised land. Thus you see that our Father in heaven will punish his very dearest and best children when they disobey him. People like Moses, however, soon become very sorry when they have done wrong, and they confess that they have sinned, and do not do the same things again. God then comforts them, and that makes the trouble much easier to bear.

Soon after this, when the people were once more on the borders of the promised land, God said to Moses, "Come up into this mountain, and look down on the land which I have given to the children of Israel; and when you have seen it, you too shall go where your fathers are and where Aaron your brother has gone." At this time Moses said, "O Lord God, thou hast

begun to show thy servant thy greatness. I pray thee, let me go over and see that good land that is beyond the river."

But the Lord said to him, "Speak no more to me of this matter. Go to the top of the hill, and lift up your eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with your eyes; for you shall not go over Jordan."

Moses then knew that he must not ask for that any more, so he prayed that God would set some one over the people who should be wise and fit to lead them. God desired him to take Joshua and lay his hands on him in the presence of all the people, and to give him charge before the people that he should in future be their leader; and Moses should put some of his honour upon Joshua, that the children of Israel might obey him. Moses did so. Then, before he died, he spoke many beautiful words to the children of Israel, and he wrote them in a book, that they might remember them for ever. He reminded them of all God had done for them from the time they came out of Egypt, and he repeated all the laws that God had given them, and urged them very earnestly to keep all those laws, and to obey and love God always.

After Moses had read for the people, in very beautiful words, all these histories and warnings, and after

he had blessed them once more, he went up from the plain where they were staying unto the mountain of Nebo. There he climbed a high point of the mountain, and from that he looked upon the beautiful land into which the children of Israel were soon to enter.

MOSES LOOKING DOWN UPON THE PROMISED LAND.

And the Lord said to him, "This is the land which I promised to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, that I would give it to their children. I have caused you to see it with your eyes; but you shall not go over thither."

So Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there on the mountain; and no one knows where his grave is to this day.

Moses and Elijah are the only men whose history does not end with their leaving this world. We read, in the Gospel according to St. Matthew, that Moses appeared with Elijah on Mount Hermon, at the time of our Lord's transfiguration, and conversed with him.

RAHAB AND THE SPIES.

THE people who lived in the land of Canaan had been getting worse and worse since the time that Abraham had lived among them. In Abraham's time God had said of them, "The iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." That is, they had not yet become so bad that they must be destroyed at once, like those people who had been drowned in the Flood, or like the people in Sodom and Gomorrah. They had not yet become so bad that God would not let them have any power or have a country of their own any longer, like many other peoples we read of in history, who, when they had given up caring to do right, were crushed and conquered by some other people.

These people in Canaan were now as bad and cruel as they could be. They invented for themselves stories about gods who, like themselves, were bad and cruel; and they did cruel things to please them, so

that the more they worshipped those false gods the more hopelessly bad they became.

God now saw that it was time to destroy those wicked nations. He commanded his chosen people to go into that land and drive out and kill the inhabitants of it. Joshua was chosen to be their captain, to lead them into that promised land. He was good and brave, and he knew how to lead an army to war. The children of Israel were a better and a wiser people now than when they left Egypt. They had at last learned to obey God and to trust him; and because they trusted him they were brave. In order to get into that part of the land where Abraham had lived, they must cross the river Jordan. Not far from the river, on the other side, stood the city of Jericho. It was the first place they were to take possession of; and before they all crossed the river, Joshua sent two men to see the city, and find out all about it. These men came to Jericho, and went into a house, built on the wall of the city, which belonged to a woman named Rahab. The king of Jericho heard that some of the Israelites had come to find out all about the country. He therefore sent a message to Rahab, saying, "Give up those men that have come to your house; for they are spies." But Rahab hid the two men under a quantity of flax that she had spread out to dry upon

the flat roof of her house. When those who had come to seek the spies were gone away, thinking to catch

RAHAB HIDING THE TWO SPIES.

them on their way back to Joshua, Rahab came up to them on the house-top, and said to them, "The people

of this land are in terror because of you; for we have heard how the Lord your God dried up the water of the Red Sea for you, when you came out of Egypt. Now, therefore, since I have shown you kindness, promise me that when you get possession of this land, you will show kindness to me and my relations, and save us from death." The men solemnly promised her that if she did not betray them, or say where they were gone, then they would certainly deal kindly with her when the Lord should give the city to the Israelites. Rahab then let them out through a window and down over the wall of the city, for the city gates were shut. And she said to them, "Hide yourselves in the mountain until the men who are seeking you shall have come back to the city; then you can go your way safely."

It was with a scarlet cord that Rahab let them down by the wall; so they said to her, "When we come into the land, do you bring your father, and your mother, and your brothers and sisters, into this house, and bind this scarlet line in the window, so that we shall know the house, and we will save every one that is in it." The spies went and hid in the mountain for three days, until their pursuers had returned to Jericho. After that they came down and went over the river to Joshua. They told him all that had

happened—how the people of the land were in terror because of the children of Israel, and how they had promised Rahab to save her and her family. At last the time was come for the whole of the children of Israel to go over the river Jordan into the land promised to their fathers long before.

God therefore made a dry path for his people through the river Jordan, as he had made one for them through the Red Sea. It was not done in quite the same way, but it was just as wonderful. The people of Canaan were more terrified than ever when they heard how the children of Israel had crossed the Jordan. The city of Jericho was carefully guarded; and no one was allowed either to come in or to go out through the gates. The children of Israel were commanded to make war on Jericho, in quite a different way from that in which they had overcome the kings on the other side of the river; and they did just as God commanded them. They marched all round the walls of the city once every day for six days. On the seventh day they rose early in the morning, for on that day they had to march round the walls seven times. When they had marched round the seventh time, the priests blew a long loud blast upon their trumpets. And Joshua said to the people, "Shout; for the Lord hath given you the city."

The people therefore shouted, and the walls of the city fell. All the armed men went in and took the city, and killed every creature in it, as God had commanded; only Rahab and all who were in her house they saved. They brought them away out of the city, and they burned Jericho to the ground.

Rahab and her family were saved, because she had believed God and shown kindness to his people. Afterwards she became the wife of one of the Israelites, and her children were greatly blessed.

GIDEON.

IN the days when the children of Israel were ruled by judges, there was a man named Gideon, who wrought out for them a great deliverance from their enemies. The Israelites had sinned so much against God, that, to punish them, he had, during seven years, allowed the Midianites to oppress them sorely. When the crops were ripe, these people would come down upon them in swarms,—like grasshoppers, we are told, for multitude; eating up and sweeping away everything within their reach,—corn, cattle, grass,—until the land was utterly wasted. In their trouble the Israelites cried to God for help against their enemies; and he gave it to them in a wonderful manner. As Gideon was one day threshing wheat beside a wine-press, in order to hide it from the Midianites, the angel of the Lord appeared to him, and saying, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour," bade him go and free Israel from the hands of the enemy.

Gideon did not know who it was that talked with him, but he prayed the stranger not to depart until food and drink—after the hospitable custom of the country—had been brought him. Then he hastened home, dressed a kid, baked cakes of flour, and returning, set the meal before him whom he thought some great

GIDEON THRESHING CORN.

man travelling that way. The angel bade him lay the food upon the rock where they stood, beneath an oak

tree. Then, putting forth the staff which was in his hand, he touched it, and, behold, fire burst out of the rock and entirely consumed it, as a burnt-offering to God.

THE SACRIFICE.

Gideon now knew that it was an angel who spoke to him; and he set himself at once to do what God

commanded for the deliverance of his countrymen. In that same night, by God's command, he threw down the altar which the Israelites had set up to Baal; for which they would have killed him, had not God preserved his life.

A mighty army of Midianites and their allies now gathered against Israel. Gideon called together all the tribes near at hand to meet them. He had feared to believe that God would save Israel by means of him, until certain signs he had asked of God, in confirmation, convinced him that it verily was so. With thirty-two thousand men, he took up his post on high ground overlooking the enemy, who were in the valley beneath.

But God did not choose that the victory should be won by numbers, lest the Israelites should think it was their own valour that had rescued them. So after it had been proclaimed that every one who was afraid might go home (which carried off twenty-two thousand of Gideon's soldiers), the remainder were afterwards, by God's will, reduced to three hundred—men to be trusted. This done, Gideon and his servant stole down the hillside at night to see what the enemy was about.

The sleepy Midianites did not know what quick ears and sharp wits were close at hand. They felt quite at their ease. And so Gideon heard one talking to another of a strange dream he had had, which that

other declared meant that God had delivered them into the hand of Gideon. Hastening back to his brave little band, he told them to take each one a trumpet, and a pitcher with a lamp within it, and bade them, when the time of action came, do as he did.

In the darkness he marched them down and surrounded the camp of the Midianites. Then each man, following his leader, blew his trumpet, and, breaking the pitcher, with a shout of, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon," flashed his lamp on the startled foe. The Midianites, not knowing whence the attack came, in the darkness and confusion fell one upon another, and fled in utter panic. Then the Israelites from all quarters joined in the hot pursuit which Gideon and his little band gave to the enemy. Gideon called upon the men of Ephraim for a particular service—that of guarding the waters that lay between the fleeing foe and their own country. They captured two of the great Midianite princes—Oreb and Zeeb, of whom we read in the Psalms as among God's enemies—and put them to death. But the pride of the Ephraimites was hurt at their not having been summoned to fight the Midianites before they had been put to flight by Gideon. They felt that a slight had been put upon them, and they spoke very sharply about it to him. Gideon could not afford to quarrel with them, so he

answered soothingly, saying that what they had done —in taking the two princes—was of far more importance than his own share in the enterprise. And this pacified them. The three hundred, "faint, yet pur-

GIDEON AND THE EPHRAIMITES.

suing," followed the enemy over Jordan; crushing them so utterly that the Midianites vexed the people of Israel no more. In this wonderful manner did God deliver them by the hand of Gideon.

SAMSON.

AFTER the time of Gideon the children of Israel fell again many times into bad ways, and turned to worship idols; and as often as they did so they got into trouble. After a long course of sin and idolatry, they began to be sorely troubled by a people called the Philistines. These were the children of some of the people who had lived in Canaan before the Israelites came into it, and they still kept possession of one part of the country, where they had several towns of their own. They were strong men and good soldiers. They used to come and rob the Israelites of their corn and cattle, or make them pay money to them; and they took possession of some of the Israelites' towns altogether. for God allowed them to overcome the Israelites.

At the time the Philistines were oppressing the Israelites, there were among the latter a man and his wife who worshipped God and prayed to him. They had as yet no child; but one day God sent an angel to tell

them that they should soon have a son. He also said that their son should be God's servant from his youth, and that he should begin to overcome the Philistines.

In due time this boy was born, and he was called Samson. From the time that he was a baby, his parents gave him to God, to be his servant. Now, whenever one of the children of Israel was given to God in this way, he was called a "Nazarite." There were certain signs by which a Nazarite was known from other people. One sign was that he did not drink wine or any strong drink; another was that his hair was not cut, but was allowed to grow as long as it could.

God blessed Samson as he grew; and when he was grown the Spirit of God gave him very wonderful strength. He was so strong that when people now see a very strong man they sometimes say that he is "a Samson." Once when Samson was on a journey he met a fierce lion, and though he had no weapon in his hand, he laid hold of the lion and killed him.

Samson had several quarrels with the Philistines, for they treated him very badly indeed; and though we are not told that he ever led an army against them, yet he killed many of them with his own hand. By-and-by they grew very much afraid of him. They looked upon him as their greatest enemy; and once, when he had done them much mischief, they sent an

army to the place where he was, to make him a prisoner. The people of the place were frightened when they saw this army; but the Philistines said, "We want no one but Samson. If you give him up to us, we will do you no harm." These people were

SAMSON SLAYS THE LION.

not very brave. They thought it safer to give their friend Samson up to his enemies than to go to war with the Philistines. So they said to Samson, "We are come to bind you and give you up to the Philistines." Samson allowed them to bind his arms down to his body with new ropes, and to bring him to the Philistines.

When these enemies saw the man whom they had feared so much thus bound and helpless, they shouted. Then Samson's great strength came upon him, and he broke the new ropes with which he was bound; then taking up the jaw-bone of an ass which was lying on the ground, with it he slew a thousand men of the Philistines. Some time after that the Philistines heard that Samson was in one of their cities; so they shut the gates of the city, and set a number of men to catch him when he should try to leave it. But Samson rose at midnight, and lifting up the city gates, carried them away on his shoulders.

Delilah, a Philistine wicked woman beloved by Samson,—some think Samson married her,—was approached by the lords of the Philistines, who said to her, "We will give you ever so much money if you find out for us what it is that makes Samson so strong." They thought that if they knew this secret they could soon find a way to overcome him.

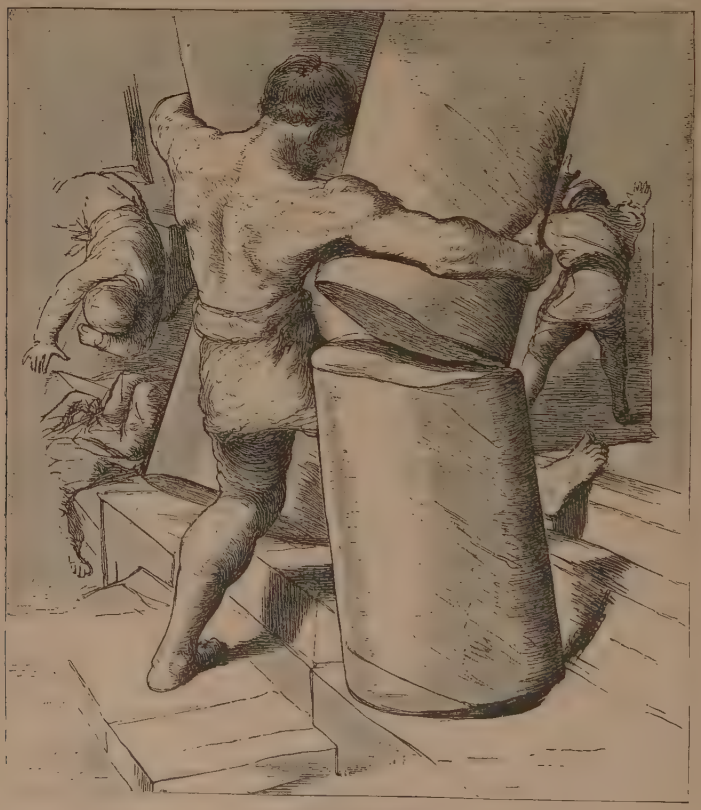
Delilah was willing to give Samson up to his enemies if they paid her well for it, so she asked Samson what it was that made him so strong. At first he would not tell her; so she wept, and said that if he kept secrets from her he did not love her. Samson could not bear to see her tears, for he did love her truly; so he said to her, "No razor has ever touched my head,

am a Nazarite. If my hair were shaved off, then ould cease to be a Nazarite, and I should be no r than any other man."

lah knew now that Samson had really told her ret; so she sent for the lords of the Philistines, the money in their hands to give ast asleep she got a man to come g hair. Then she called, "The you, Samson!" and he rose up, ld overcome them as easily as ever; strength was gone. The Philistines, therefore, took him, and bound him with fetters of brass; and they put out his eyes, and set him to turn ill in their prison-house.

ne day the lords of the Philistines came together ffer sacrifices to their god Dagon, and to rejoice; they said, "Our god has given Samson our enemy our hands." In the midst of their feasting and merry-making they had Samson brought into their idol's house, that they might mock him and make sport of him. So they mocked at Samson, and praised their god Dagon. The house was full of people, and there were also great numbers on the roof. Samson was set between the pillars which supported the roof. And he prayed to God to restore to him his great strength, that he might once more slay the enemies of his people.

Then he took hold of the two middle pillars, and bowed himself with all his might; so the pillars broke and the house fell, and Samson and all the lords of the



DEATH OF SAMSON.

Philistines were killed in the fall of it. So Samson killed more Philistines at the time of his death than he had ever done in his life.

HANNAH PRESENTING SAMUEL TO ELI.

SAMUEL.

THE good people among the children of Israel used to come very often to a place called Shiloh to worship God there. One day a good woman who loved God brought her little boy to Shiloh. She had given her child to God, and she wished him to be brought up at Shiloh, under Eli the high priest's care, that he might wait upon the priests when they offered sacrifices in the holy place. He was very young when she brought him there, and she used to come and see

him every year, and take him a little coat which she had made for him. This child's name was Samuel.

Young Samuel grew up in Shiloh, waiting upon Eli in the holy place—a sweet boy, loved by every one who saw him. And God called him to be his servant and his prophet. One night, after Samuel had lain down in his bed, he heard a voice calling, "Samuel!" He got up and went to Eli, and said, "You called me: I am here." Eli answered, "I did not call you. Lie down again." When he had lain down he again heard the voice call, "Samuel!" Again he went to Eli, and said, "Here I am; for now you did call me." But Eli said, "I did not call you, my son. Lie down again."

A third time Samuel heard that call. And when he went to Eli the third time, Eli knew that God had called Samuel, so he said to him, "Go lie down; and if he calls you again you shall say, 'Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth.'" Samuel obeyed, and went and lay down. And God called as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" This time Samuel answered, "Speak; for thy servant heareth." Then the Lord told Samuel that because Eli's sons were wicked, and their father did not hinder their bad ways, therefore he was about to send on Eli's family the terrible punishments he had before threatened it with: the two sons of Eli should die in one day, and God would choose a man to be high

priest after him who was neither child nor grandchild of Eli.

This would indeed be a sad thing for poor Eli to hear. Samuel was unwilling to grieve the old man by telling him, so he lay still until the morning. The

"SPEAK, LORD; FOR THY SERVANT HEARETH."

next day he said nothing about the matter, until Eli asked him what the Lord had said to him. Then Samuel told him. And Eli answered, "It is the Lord; let him do what he thinks good."

From this time Samuel was a prophet. He spoke

the words of God to the people, and sometimes God told him what was going to take place. And when things came to pass just as Samuel had said, then all the children of Israel knew that he was God's prophet, and they honoured him and gave heed to his words. Eli's two sons were killed in a battle with the Philistines. Old Eli that day was sitting in Shiloh on a seat by the wayside, waiting, with a sad heart, for news of the battle. And a messenger came and told him all that had happened. When he heard that the ark of God was taken, he fell backwards from his seat, and his neck was broken, and he died, for he was an old man, and heavy. He had been judge as well as high priest, and after his death Samuel became judge in his stead.

Samuel was a good judge. He made the people put away their idols. When this had been done, he gathered the people together at Mizpeh, and there he prayed to God for them, that he would save them from the Philistines, who had oppressed and troubled them so long. The Philistines heard that the Israelites were gathered together at Mizpeh, and came up to fight with them. Then the people said to Samuel, "Cease not to pray to the Lord our God for us, that he will save us out of the hand of the Philistines."

Samuel therefore cried to God for Israel; and God

heard him, and sent a great thunder, which threw the Philistines into confusion. The Israelites then drove them back into their own cities, and they came no more into the Israelites' country all the days of Samuel.

Samuel lived for many years, a prophet speaking God's words to the children of Israel, and also was their judge. They were better and happier in his time than they had been since Joshua's days. He was both a wise and a good ruler.

DAVID AND JONATHAN.

WHEN Saul was returning with his army after the great victory over Goliath and the Philistines, the women came to meet him out of all the towns, singing and dancing, as their custom was when they rejoiced. In their songs they praised David more than they did Saul. This made Saul very angry. He thought, "They are honouring David more than me; they will want to give him the kingdom too." And from that day he hated David, and tried to get him killed. But David returned victorious from other battles too, and the people loved him and praised him more than ever, so that Saul could not bear the sight of him. And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David. And Jonathan told David, saying, "Saul, my father, seeketh to kill thee. I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself; and I will reason with my father of thee; and what I

see, that I will tell thee." And Jonathan spake good of David, and said unto his father, "Let not the king sin against his servant David; because he hath not sinned against thee; and more, he put his life in his hand for

JONATHAN PLEADING FOR DAVID.

thee, and slew the Philistine. Thou sawest it, and didst rejoice; wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?"

Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan, and said,

"As the Lord liveth, he shall not be slain." And Jonathan called David, and showed him all those things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as in times past. About this time David was playing the harp before the king.

THE FAREWELL MEETING OF JONATHAN AND DAVID.

When the gloomy, terrified mood had returned upon Saul, he twice cast a sharp-pointed weapon called a javelin at David, thinking to kill him; but each time David escaped. After that, David and his friend Jonathan talked together, and they made a plan that David should go away and hide himself. They sorrow-

fully bade each other good-bye, and kissed each other, and promised to be friends always.

When Saul found that Jonathan was taking David's part, he fell into a rage, and said, "You have chosen the son of Jesse to your own ruin; for as long as this son of Jesse lives you will never be king." Still Jonathan loved David and helped him, though he knew well that what his father said was true—that not he, but David, was chosen to be king after Saul. Saul hunted from place to place in search of David, for whenever he heard that he was in a certain place, he at once went with a band of men to take him. David lived for some time in a cave, and several men came to him there, and he became their captain. They fought several battles with the enemies of the Israelites, and saved the Israelites from being robbed. But David never would fight with Saul. He knew that some day God would give him the kingdom; but as long as God left it to Saul, he would not raise his hand to hurt him.

One day Saul came and lay down to sleep in a cave where David and his men were hiding. Some of them wanted to kill him, but David would not let them. Another time David and one of his friends walked right into the place where Saul and his men were all fast asleep. There lay Saul, with his spear stuck in

the ground at his head and a cruse of water beside him. David's friend said, "Now God has given your enemy

DAVID SHOWING THE KING'S SPEAR AND CRUSE.

into your hand; let me kill him with his own spear." But David said, "No, he is our king: his day shall come; but I will not hurt the man whom God has

made king. Take the spear and the cruse, and come away." When they had got to the top of a hill opposite, David called out to the man who had been sleeping beside Saul, "Oh, you are a brave fellow! How well you have watched by your master the king! See where the king's spear is, and the cruse of water that was beside him." When Saul heard this he cried, "Is that your voice, my son David?" David answered, "It is my voice, O king. Why does my lord thus follow after his servant? What have I done?"

Then said Saul, "I have sinned; I have been a fool. Return, my son David; for I will not harm you any more." David now called on one of Saul's men to come and fetch the king's spear. And Saul said, "God bless you, my son David; you shall do great things, and shall overcome." David therefore went on his way, and Saul returned, and did not pursue after him any more.

One day a messenger came and told David that Saul and his three sons had been killed in a battle with the Philistines. David mourned when he heard this, and he made a sad but very beautiful song of lamentation for his beloved friend Jonathan.

DEATH OF ABSALOM.

ABSALOM, son of David, king of Israel, seems to have been a favourite child, and had, probably, been very much indulged and spoiled by his father. Absalom was very handsome—so handsome that people delighted to look at him. Besides, he could have, when he chose, such kind pleasant manners that he obliged people to love him. But, though he could make people love him, Absalom was really heartless and cruel. He was not satisfied with being the dearly-loved son of a great king; he wanted to be greater than any of his brothers, and to be the finest lord in the land, as he was really the handsomest man in it. So he got splendid horses and chariots, and when he went out to drive he had fifty men running before him. This seems foolish enough, but soon a more wicked thought came to him—he would get the people to make him king instead of his father. So he set himself to please them and to win their favour. Saying civil things

just to please people is quite a different thing from being really kind. When Absalom had quite won the hearts of the people, he asked his father's leave to go for a while to Hebron; and David said, "Go in peace."

Absalom had already sent to his friends in every part of the country a message, saying, "When you hear the sound of a trumpet, then say, 'Absalom is king; he is reigning in Hebron.'" So when this signal was given, every one who wished to make him king came to him at Hebron. And it was told David, "The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom; they are going to make him king." When David heard this, he did not act like the brave warrior that he was at other times. He did not blow a trumpet and call his brave men together to go out against Absalom's army. He said to his servants, "Let us go away from Jerusalem, else Absalom will come and fight against the city, and there will be bloodshed."

David and his servants went hastily out of Jerusalem, and many men who were true to their king went with him. As they went up the hill out of Jerusalem, David covered his head and wept; and all the people who went with him wept also.

In the meantime the rebels came into Jerusalem, and they did all sorts of wicked things there; and

Absalom took possession of his father's palace, and called himself king. And one who was really a friend

ABSALOM IN ARMS AGAINST DAVID.

of David said to Absalom: "Let us gather a great army out of the whole country, and you shall go at the head of it, and we will surround your father and

his soldiers, and kill every man of them." Now this was really a plan to give David's men time to prepare; but Absalom did not know that. David's friends in Jerusalem then sent to tell him what the rebels were going to do. So by the time Absalom had gathered his army, David's soldiers were ready to meet them. The two armies met in a wood. David's old soldiers soon threw the rebels into confusion, so that more of them were killed by getting entangled in the wood, when they were running away, than in the actual battle.

Absalom himself fled; but as he was riding away in great haste his mule carried him under a great oak tree, and his long hair got entangled in the boughs. The mule, however, still went on, and Absalom was left hanging from the tree. A man who saw him there told Joab, David's general. "Why did you not kill him?" said Joab. "I would have rewarded you." The man answered, "I would not lay a hand upon the king's son for anything you could give me; for I heard the king say, 'Let no one touch the young man Absalom.'" For his own safety, David was not allowed to accompany his soldiers to this battle.

Joab took three darts and went and thrust them through Absalom while he was yet alive hanging from the tree. And Joab's servants came and killed him;

and they put his body into a pit that was in the wood, and piled a great heap of stones on it.

King David was sitting in the gate of the city waiting for news of the battle. The first messenger came and bowed down before the king, and said, "All

DEATH OF ABSALOM.

is well. Blessed be the Lord your God, who has given up the men that fought against the king." David said, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" The messenger answered, "When Joab sent me, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was." Soon another messenger came up, and cried, "Tidings, my lord the king! God

has this day punished all who fought against you." Again David asked, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" The messenger answered, "May all the enemies of the king be as that young man is!" Then David knew that his wicked son was dead, and his heart was grieved. He went up to his chamber weeping, and moaning, "O my son Absalom, Absalom, my son!"

SOLOMON.

WHEN David died, Solomon his son became king. God had promised David that the king who reigned in Jerusalem should always be one of his family. Some of you may remember that when Jesus was on earth people sometimes called him "the Son of David." He was one of David's family, just as David was one of Abraham's family.

In Solomon's time the land had peace and quietness. He had no need to fight battles, for David had overcome all his enemies. God had promised David that his son should be a "man of rest." Solomon was young when he became king. He knew but little of the world and its ways; therefore it was hard for him to know how to rule well over a kingdom. He felt this in his heart, and that showed his good sense. Soon after he was made king, God spoke to him in a dream by night, and said, "Ask what I shall give you." Solomon said, "O Lord my God, thou hast

made me king in room of my father David; and I am like a little child: I know not how to act. Give me, therefore, an understanding heart, that I may know what is good and what is bad; for who is able to judge so great a people?"

God was pleased that Solomon had asked not for riches, or honour, or a long life, but for wisdom and knowledge, that he might be a good king. Therefore, God granted him that understanding heart for which he had asked, and he gave him also riches and honour.

In those days the king was chief judge in the land, and every hard thing was brought to him to be decided. One day there came before him two women, one of whom had a baby in her arms. The other woman said, "My lord king, this woman and I live in the same house, and we each had a baby boy of the same age; but this woman's child died in the night, and while I was asleep she came and stole my boy, and put her dead boy into my arms. And when I awoke, the child in my arms was dead; but when I looked at him, I knew that he was not my child." Her neighbour said, "That is not true: this living child is mine, the dead child is hers." King Solomon said, "Bring me a sword." And when it was brought, he said, "Cut the living child in two, and give half to the one woman and half to the other." Then the true

mother cried out, "O my lord, give her the living child; oh, do not kill it!" But the other said, "Let it be neither yours nor mine, but divide it." Then said the king, "The woman who would not hurt the child is the mother; give it to her."

JUDGMENT OF SOLOMON.

When the people heard of this judgment they honoured the king greatly, for they saw that God had given him wisdom to do justice.

Now the time was come to build that great house that David had wished to build—a house in which to place the ark of God and all the things that were used in his worship; a house where the high priest and the

other priests who helped him might worship God continually; and where all the people might come together to worship on their great feast-days. David had often spoken about this house. It was the desire of his heart that he should build it; but God would not let him do so, because he had shed so much blood. God allowed Solomon to build his house, because he was a man of peace. Nevertheless David's great delight was to think about it. He wished it to be a very glorious and beautiful house, and he gave Solomon a great quantity of beautiful and costly materials for the adorning of it—gold and silver and precious stones, besides a great quantity of brass and iron and marble. He also told Solomon the fashion in which it was to be built.

Solomon brought together a great number of clever workmen to assist in building this temple. There was no noise of hammers or of saws heard at the place where the building was going on. The king had all the stones cut and prepared at the quarry, so that each stone was brought ready to be laid in its place. The beams for the roof, and the doors, and the pillars were also prepared before they were brought there. Inside the house the walls were all lined with costly wood, carved, and overlaid with gold. The doors and ceilings were also carved and overlaid with gold.

It took seven years to finish this beautiful temple. Everything was of the most costly material and the most beautiful workmanship that Solomon could get.

SOLOMON'S TEMPLE.

When all was finished he called the people together; and the priests brought the holy things into the places prepared for them. Solomon stood in the court of the

temple upon a high platform in the sight of all the people. The singers and those who played upon instruments of music sang and praised God After that the king spoke to the people and blessed them. And then he knelt down in their sight and offered a very beautiful prayer for all the people, and for every one who should at any time come to pray in that temple. The priests offered sacrifices, and the king made a great feast for all the people in Jerusalem; and they rejoiced greatly, and praised God for seven days.

Great people used to come from distant countries to see the splendour of King Solomon, and also to hear his wisdom. In a country far away in the south there was a queen who, like a great many other people, used to wonder about many things that no one had ever been able to explain to her. When she heard about the wisdom of Solomon, she said to herself, "I will make a journey to that distant land, and tell all these thoughts to the king of the Israelites. If he is as wise as they say, he will be able to tell me what I want so much to know." She took a great number of servants with her; and they were many days on their journey. They rode upon camels; and they also had camels loaded with costly gifts for King Solomon. When they came to Jerusalem, the queen of Sheba told Solomon the thoughts that had troubled her, and all

the things she had so long been wondering about; and he answered all her questions. The queen of Sheba was much impressed by his answers, for she had not

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA'S VISIT TO SOLOMON.

had much opportunity of learning about God. She was also struck by the splendour of his house, and his servants, and the beautiful temple he had built. She said. "When I was in my own country I heard of

King Solomon's wisdom and greatness, and I could not believe all I heard; but now I know that the half was not told me. Happy are those who are with you always, and who hear your wisdom."

Solomon and the queen of Sheba gave each other costly gifts; and then she went home with a knowledge more precious to her than all the gifts. Many years afterwards, our Lord Jesus commended the queen of Sheba for going all that way to hear the wisdom of Solomon.

ELIJAH AND ELISHA.

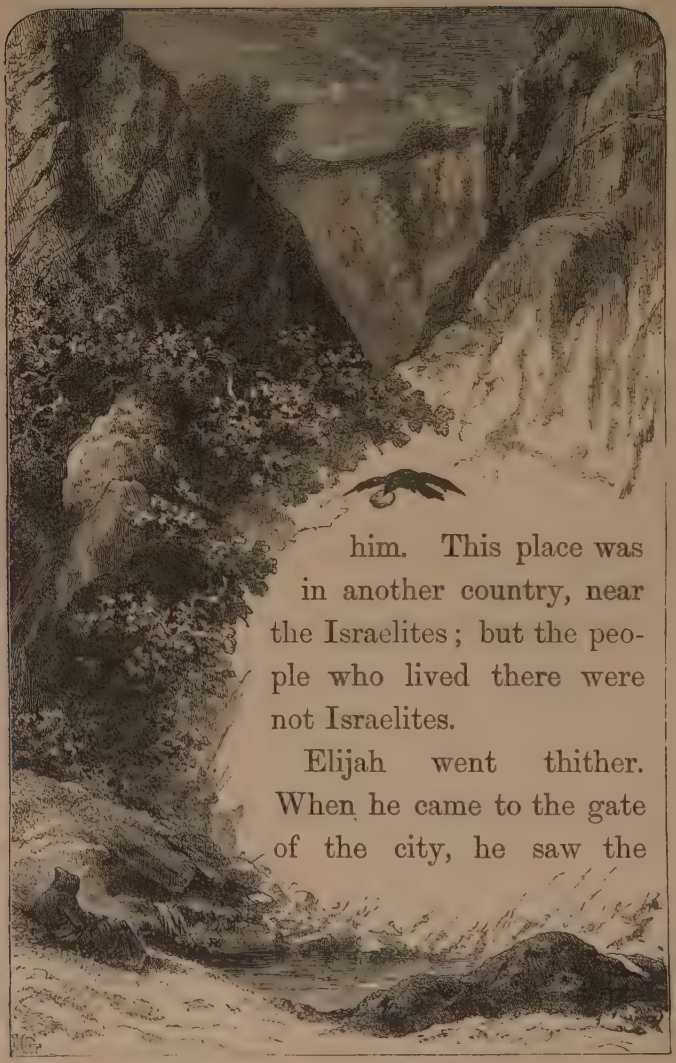
ONE of the bad kings of Israel was called Ahab. He built altars to worship the false god Baal; and he married a wicked woman called Jezebel, who put to death many of the good men and prophets of God, being determined that every one should worship Baal. The head-servant of Ahab's household was a good man called Obadiah. He saved a hundred prophets from the fury of Jezebel, by hiding them in a cave, where he fed them and took care of them until the danger was past.

In the midst of all these wicked doings, God sent a great and good prophet called Elijah to Ahab to tell him that there should be neither rain nor dew in the land for three years. This would be sure to cause a famine, for nothing could grow in such long-continued dry weather. God took care of his servant Elijah all through that famine; for he sent him to stay in a place where there was a brook of running water. All the

time that Elijah lived there, God sent ravens to feed him. The ravens brought him bread and meat every morning and every evening, and he drank water from

OBADIAH FEEDING THE PROPHETS.

the brook, until it, at last, dried up. Then God told Elijah to arise and go to a certain place which he named; for he had commanded a widow there to keep



him. This place was in another country, near the Israelites; but the people who lived there were not Israelites.

Elijah went thither. When he came to the gate of the city, he saw the

ELIJAH FED BY RAVENS.

widow gathering sticks; and he called to her and said, "I pray you, fetch me a drink of water." As she was going for it, he said, "I pray you, bring me also a piece of bread." The widow answered, "Indeed I have no bread; I have nothing but a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse; and I am gathering a few sticks, that I may bake a cake for myself and my son. When that is eaten, we must die, for we have no more to eat." Elijah said to her, "Fear not: first make me a little cake, and then a cake for yourself and your son; for the Lord God of Israel has said that your meal and your oil shall last until he sends rain upon the earth." The widow did as Elijah had told her, for she believed God's word that he had brought to her. She and her son and Elijah lived together for a good while; and every day she found a little meal in the barrel and a little oil in the cruse — always enough for that day.

It was while staying here that the poor widow's son sickened and died. Elijah, by earnest prayer to God, brought him again to life.

At the end of three years, God said to Elijah, "Go, show yourself to Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth." Meanwhile Ahab had been seeking for Elijah through all the land; for he believed it was Elijah who

had brought the drought and the famine upon them. No doubt he meant to kill him.

After they had met, Ahab sent and called the people together, as Elijah desired; for with all his anger against Elijah, he was afraid of him. Afterwards, when Jezebel threatened the life of Elijah, he fled, and got away into the wilderness. There, at the end of a day's journey, he sat down under a juniper tree, weary and out of heart. God, who knew how sad he was, gave him food and drink, and sent an angel to him with loving words to comfort him. After he was rested and refreshed, God spoke to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

Elijah told all the trouble that was in his heart: how he was grieved because the Israelites had forsaken God, and thrown down his altars, and killed his prophets. "And I only am left," said Elijah; "and they wish to kill me too, because I have tried to turn them back to the true God."

But God told him that there were still seven thousand people in Israel that had never bowed down to Baal. He also bade him go and anoint a young man called Elisha to be a prophet, who should speak God's words to the people after he himself was taken away from them.

Elijah went, as God had directed him, to seek the

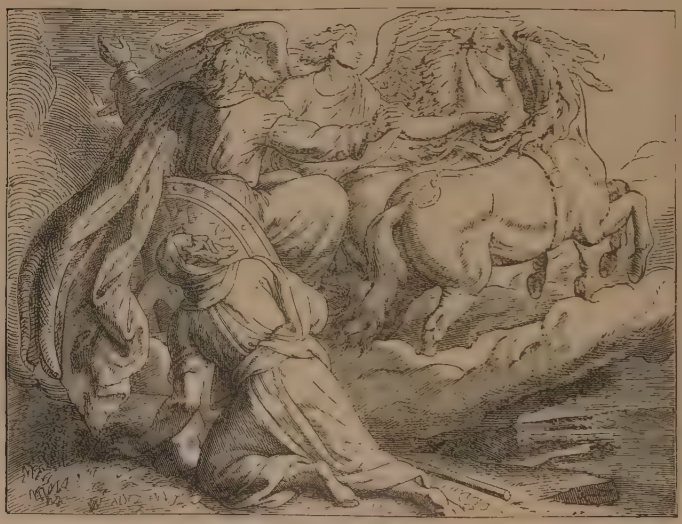
man who should be prophet in his place. He found Elisha ploughing in a field; and the great prophet took off his mantle and threw it over the shoulders of the man whom God had chosen to be prophet after him. Elisha knew then that he was called to follow the great prophet and to be with him. He left his oxen standing in the furrow, and ran after Elijah, and

PLOUGHING.

said, "I pray you, let me go and kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow you." From that time Elisha became Elijah's companion. At length God's time came to take his servant away from all the troubles of that wicked land. Yet Elijah was not to die.

One day he and Elisha left the place where they

were staying and went together toward the Jordan. Elisha knew that it was the last day he should spend with his beloved teacher in this world, and he was determined to stay with him to the last. When they got to the Jordan, Elijah took off his mantle, and having wrapped it together, he struck the water with it. By



ELIJAH TAKEN UP TO HEAVEN.

this means the river was divided, and they passed over on dry ground to the other side. After that Elijah said, "Tell me what I shall do for you before I am taken away from you." Elisha answered, "I pray you, let a double portion of your spirit be given to me." Elijah said, "You have asked a hard thing; but if you

see me when I am taken up, you shall have it." So they went on, talking together as they went, both knowing that they should not speak with each other in this world any more. As they talked, there came a chariot of fire and horses of fire, and parted them from each other. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. When Elisha saw it he cried, "My father, my father!" And he mourned because he saw Elijah no more. He then took up Elijah's mantle that had fallen from him, and returned alone by the way they had come. When he reached the Jordan, he too struck the Jordan with Elijah's mantle, saying, "Where is the Lord God of Elijah?" and again the waters were parted.

The double portion of Elijah's spirit that Elisha inherited is amply shown by the miracles he wrought. He is supposed to have died in Samaria, as an old man, in the reign of Joash, king of Israel.

ESTHER BEFORE KING AHASUERUS.

THE Ahasuerus of whom we read in the Book of Esther was a powerful Persian king. His kingdom was a splendid one, not only for its extent —containing a hundred and twenty-seven provinces— but for its wealth and the grandeur of its court.

In the third year of this king's reign he made a great feast for his nobles—or rather a festival, for it lasted during six entire months. His queen, whose name was Vashti, also at the same time made a great feast for her ladies. For it was not the custom in that part of the world for men and women to eat and drink together.

During the course of his festival, the king, who had drunk too much wine, so far forgot what was due to his queen as well as to himself, as to command that she should be brought in among them, that all might see how beautiful she was. The queen very properly refused to go. Now one of his wise men said to the

king that if Vashti went unpunished in this matter, all the wives in the kingdom would set their husbands at naught. Ahasuerus therefore, in his great wrath, put away Vashti from being his wife. For in the East, and in those days, women were little better than the slaves of their husbands, so that king and courtier alike were amazed at the queen's venturing to disobey his commands.

Having thus got rid of his wife, the king's next care was to find another. The one that he chose was a beautiful Jewish maiden, whose name was Esther.

Some years after the king had married Esther, Haman, his chief minister, became deeply offended with Mordecai, the cousin of Esther. Haman considered that Mordecai had not treated him with the respect which he thought his due. Out of revenge he got from the king a decree or letter ordering the utter destruction of his Jewish subjects—men, women, and children. As soon as this vile decree became known to Mordecai, he sent word to Esther that it was her duty to use her power with the king, by whom she was much loved, to get it reversed. Esther reminded Mordecai that, according to the laws of the kingdom, any one going unbidden into the king's presence in his inner palace was condemned to death, unless the king should please to hold out to that person the golden

sceptre, in token of safety; and that for thirty days past she herself had not been called to his presence. Mordecai answered that, as she was a Jewess, her own life, queen though she was, would assuredly be taken with the rest; so that, though there was risk on the one hand, there was certainty of death on the other. And even if the golden sceptre were *not* stretched out to her, it was a glorious thing to die for her people. Queen Esther then accepted the dangerous service, asking only that the Jews of the city should fast and pray on her behalf. Arraying herself in her queenly robes, Esther therefore presented herself before the throne of her dread husband.

When Ahasuerus saw her he held out to her the golden sceptre of peace, and kindly asked what was her request. It should be granted, he said, even to the half of his kingdom. Thus encouraged, Esther ventured at last to make known to the king that the decree which he had just issued would destroy her and all her countrymen. Upon hearing this, the king, enraged at Haman, ordered that he should be hanged on a gallows which that wicked man had prepared for Mordecai. The next thing was to protect the Jews, for whom Esther had so nobly risked her life, from the unjust decree, which even he, king though he was, had no power to recall. The only way in which he could

make it of no effect was to order letters to be sent to all the provinces, authorizing the Jews, in the king's name, to arm themselves and kill all who attacked them,

ESTHER BEFORE KING AHASUERUS.

including the wives and children of their enemies, whose goods and lands they were also entitled to seize for their own use. Horsemen were hastily sent

forth in all directions with these royal letters, which caused such alarm throughout the kingdom that many of the Persians became Jews in order to save themselves.

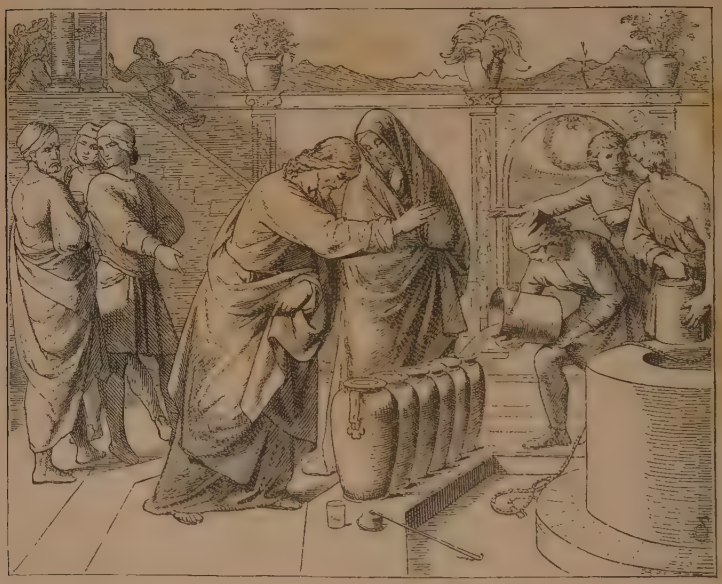
The Jews were not slow to make use of the liberty the king had granted them. They set upon their enemies with such hearty good-will that in a very short space they slew more than seventy-five thousand of them, the king's native subjects—multitudes in the provinces, a number even in his own palace. To keep in mind this great deliverance, a festival was ordered to be observed yearly; and to this day the Jews throughout all countries observe, with more or less of ceremony, the festival of Purim.

EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

JESUS, when about thirty years of age, went from Nazareth to the river Jordan, where John the Baptist was preaching and baptizing many from the region round about. By-and-by Jesus came to John to be baptized by him. John forbade him, saying, "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" Jesus said unto him, "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all goodness;" and further he said, "It is right that you should baptize me." Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up out of the water, and the sky above him opened, and the Spirit of God, in the form of a dove, descended and alighted upon him; while a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

When Jesus was at a marriage in Cana of Galilee, to which his mother and his disciples were also invited,

it happened that there was not enough of wine for the guests. The mother of Jesus said to the servants, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." There were standing six water-pots, or jars of stone. Jesus said unto the servants, "Fill the water-pots with water." And



THE MARRIAGE AT CANA OF GALILEE.

they were filled up to the brim. And he again said, "Draw out now, and bear unto the ruler of the feast." When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did not know how it was (though the servants who drew the water knew), the ruler of the feast called the bridegroom, and said to him,

"Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; but thou hast kept the good wine until now." This was the first of our Lord's miracles, and it plainly showed forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.

The temple at Jerusalem, at the time our Lord was upon earth, was what is called the third temple, built with great pomp by Herod the Great—the Herod who was king of Judea at the time of our Lord's birth.

It was a grand building, covering with its several courts a large extent of ground towards the north-east of the city. These courts were built like terraces, that is, rising one above another as they drew near the temple, which, rising above them, was seen from all parts of Jerusalem.

The enclosures were used for various purposes connected with the religious rites of the Jews, and for the dwellings of the Levites; while, in the outer court of all, worldly business was transacted. Here sheep, oxen, and doves were on sale for the convenience of those who wished to present offerings; while others carried on the trade of money-changers, changing the money of strangers into the coin current in Jerusalem.

This violating of so sacred a place excited our Lord's anger. Not content with rebuking it sharply in words, saying, "My Father's house is a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves," he made, we are told, a

scourge, or whip of small cords, and with it indignantly drove out those profane, cheating people, cattle and all, overthrowing the tables of the money-changers, and scattering their money on the ground. Nor would he

JESUS CLEARING THE TEMPLE.

suffer the holy place to be made a thoroughfare by people going to and fro with their burdens.

The scribes and priests of the Jews looked on with alarm, while our Lord thus executed judgment on the profaners of the temple; for he did it as one who had authority to do it, expressly calling the temple "my

Father's house." They therefore asked him what sign—that is, what miracle—he could show to prove that God had indeed sent him.

His answer was not understood clearly by them; for, foreseeing his own death to be near at hand, he prophesied of it and of his resurrection, saying, "Destroy this *temple*, and in three days I will raise it up."

They thought he referred to the temple within whose court they were then standing, and so made light of his reply, contenting themselves with saying, "Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?"

But he spoke of the temple of his body, which was to be destroyed in bitter pangs upon the cross, laid to rest within the grave, and then raised to life again on the third day, for a glorious ascension into heaven, there to represent our human nature which he had redeemed.

Afterwards, Jesus went again into Cana of Galilee. And at Capernaum there was a certain nobleman whose son lay sick. When he heard that Jesus was come into Galilee, he went to him and besought him to come and heal his son, who, he thought, was at the point of death. Jesus said to him, "Go thy way; thy son liveth." And the man believed the words that Jesus had spoken. As he was going down to Capernaum, his servants met him and

told him, saying, "Thy son liveth." The father inquired of them the hour when his son began to amend. And they said, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him." So the father knew that it was at the same hour that Jesus said to him, "Thy son liveth;" and he himself believed, and his whole house.

This was the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judea into Galilee.

THE LEPER HEALED.

There came to Jesus a man who was afflicted with leprosy, who kneeled down before him and said, "If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." Jesus, moved with pity, put forth his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I will; be thou clean." As soon as he had spoken, the leprosy departed from the man, and

he was cleansed. Then Jesus said to him, "See thou say nothing to any man; but show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded for a testimony unto them." But the man went out and began to blaze abroad the matter, telling the people what Jesus had done for him.

The kindly, merciful nature of our Lord's miracles is strikingly shown in his healing of the poor cripple at Bethesda. At one of the gates of Jerusalem—the Sheep-gate, it was called—there was a pool called Bethesda, which means "the house of mercy." At certain seasons, we are told, an angel descended and moved the water of this pool; after which the first who stepped into it was cured, whatever might be his disease. Only one, it would appear, could be cured at a time; so round about the pool were covered places, where the sick might lie waiting for the expected troubling of the water.

Our Lord one day passing the spot saw a miserable object there, who had been a cripple for thirty-eight years, and he put to him the question, "Wilt thou be made whole?" The man, little dreaming who it was that asked him, and for what purpose, answered simply, explaining how it was that he had remained so long uncured—that being utterly helpless, he could not

get down to the pool in time enough after the troubling of the water; others less cripple than himself out-

THE CRIPPLE MADE WHOLE.

distanced his slow steps; and he had no one to carry him down, so as to be in time.

Jesus said unto him, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." Instantly his helplessness was gone. Rising

up strong and well, he took up the mat whereon he lay and walked away from the pool, by the side of which he had so long remained a helpless cripple. This

EASTERN BEDS.

miracle was performed on the Sabbath day, which the Jews in those times kept with extreme strictness. So they told the poor man, rejoicing in his new-found strength, that it was very wrong in him to carry his

bed on that sacred day. This did not make much impression on his mind; and then the Jews, unable to deny the reality of the miracle that had been wrought, charged Jesus with Sabbath-breaking, for which they sought to put him to death.

There came to Jesus a certain ruler of the synagogue, named Jairus, who fell at his feet, and besought him, saying, "My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed." And Jesus went with him, and many people followed them. And a certain woman, who had been diseased with an issue of blood for twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment; for she said within herself, "If I may but touch the hem of his garment, I shall be made well." Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, "Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole." And the woman was made whole from that hour. While Jesus spoke, there came a messenger from the ruler's house, and said to him, "Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master further." Jesus hearing this, said, "Fear not; only believe, and your daughter will live." And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, James, and John, and the father and mother of the maiden. When they were bewailing their loss,

THE DAUGHTER OF JAIRUS RAISED TO LIFE.

Jesus said unto them, "Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth." He

then took the maid by the hand; and she arose, and he commanded to give her meat. Her parents were astonished; but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done. Nevertheless, the fame of Jesus went abroad into all that land.

When Jesus heard that John the Baptist was slain, and when the apostles returned and told him all that they had done, he took them aside privately into a desert place belonging to the city of Bethsaida. And the people, when they knew it, followed him; and he received them, and spoke to them of the kingdom of God, and healed those that had need of healing. And when the day began to wear away, then came the apostles, and said unto him, "Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country places about, where they may get bread and lodging, for we are in a desert place." But Jesus said to them, "Give ye them to eat." And they said, "We have not more than five loaves and two small fishes, unless we should go and buy meat for all this people;" for they were about five thousand men, beside women and children. And Jesus said to his disciples, "Make them sit down on the grass by hundreds and by fifties in a company;" and they did so. Then Jesus took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and divided

them, and gave the portions to the disciples to set before the multitude. And they ate, and were filled; and the disciples took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.

Shortly after this, Jesus again fed the multitude. He called his disciples to him, and said, "I have much

FIVE THOUSAND FED.

pity on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat; and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint by the way." And he asked, "How many loaves have you?" His disciples answered, "Seven, and a few little fishes"

Then he bade the people sit on the ground. And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks to God. Then he gave them to the disciples, that they might give to the multitude. And they all ate, and were filled; and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full. Those that had eaten were four thousand men, beside women and children. And Jesus sent them away, himself taking ship for another place.

After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, three of his disciples, and went up on a high mountain apart. And while he prayed, his face was changed, so that it shone bright like the sun, and his raiment glistened, and was white as snow. This is what is called being transfigured—that is, changed in outward appearance. Suddenly two men appeared in glory, and were seen talking with Jesus. The disciples knew the men to be Moses and Elijah from heaven. Peter said, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles [that is, tents, or dwelling-places]—one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." While Peter was speaking, a bright cloud came and covered them; and a voice out of the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him." When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces, and were sore afraid. Jesus

came and touched them, saying, "Arise; be not afraid." And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only, who charged the disciples, saying, as they came down from the mountain, "Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen from the dead."

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

The next day after Jesus and the three apostles had come down from the mountain, they went into Capernaum; and while they walked by the way, the apostles began to dispute one with another as to which of them should be greatest in the kingdom of heaven. When

arrived at Capernaum, Jesus asked the apostles what it was that they had disputed among themselves by the way. But they, being ashamed, held their peace. However, Jesus knew what they had been talking about, for he sat down, and said, "If any man desire

JESUS TEACHETH HUMILITY.

to be first, the same shall be last of all and servant of all." Then Jesus called a little child to him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, "Truly I say unto you, Except ye be converted [that means, to turn from a bad to a good life], throw away pride, humble yourselves, and become as little children, ye shall in nowise

enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same shall be great in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso receiveth one such little child in my name receiveth me."

One day as Jesus was seated over against the treasury (a court of the temple where the money-chests were kept), he beheld how the people cast their money

THE POOR WIDOW COMMENDED.

into the chests or boxes. Many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites (a mite was a coin of very small value). And Jesus called to his disciples and said to them, "Verily [that is, truly] I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which

have cast into the treasury out of their riches, for she had nothing left to herself after casting in all that she had, even all her living."

One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to a feast in his house. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat. A woman in the city, who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, very costly, and she placed herself at his feet, weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and to wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment that filled the house with its sweet smell. One of the apostles, Simon's son (he who afterwards betrayed our Lord), said, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and the money given to the poor?" This he said, not because he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and kept the bag that held all their money. Then said Jesus, "Let her alone; against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always you have with you, but me you have not always."

Now when the Pharisee who had bidden Jesus to his house saw it, he thought within himself, Surely this man, if he were a prophet, would have known what manner of a woman this is; for she is a sinner.

Jesus, answering, said to him, "Simon, I have somewhat to say to thee." And Simon said, "Master, say on." "There was a certain creditor," said Jesus, "who had two debtors; the one owed a large sum, and the other a small sum. And when they were

THE WOMAN ANOINTING THE FEET OF JESUS.

unable to pay, the creditor freely forgave them both. Tell me therefore," said Jesus, "which of them will love him most." Simon answered, "I suppose he to whom he forgave most." Jesus said, "Thou hast rightly judged." Then he turned to the woman, and said to

Simon, "Seest thou this woman? I entered thine house, yet thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." And he said to the woman, "Thy sins are forgiven." And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" And he said to the woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

Speaking to those that were with him, he said, "Truly I say unto you, Wherever this gospel shall be preached in every part of the world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken in memory of her."

It was to this woman, Mary by name, that our Lord first showed himself after he was risen from the tomb.

PARABLES.

OUR Lord and Saviour, to make his teaching plain, and easy to be understood, often spoke by a parable. A parable means a kind of fable, or likeness to something else, wherein the events related did not really occur, although they might have done so. Yet all parables are not at first understood. The parable of the Sower is an example of this. When Jesus had spoken it to the multitude, his disciples asked him, saying, "Why speakest thou unto them in parables? What might this parable be?" Jesus answered, and said, "Because it is given unto you to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. And the parable is this: The seed sown is the word of God. Those that fell by the way-side are they that hear the word; then cometh the evil one, and taketh it out of their hearts. The seeds that fell on stony places are they who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; but these having no root,

for a while believe, and in time fall away. And those that fell among thorns are they who, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with the cares, riches, and pleasures of this life, and bring no perfect fruit. But the seeds that fell on good ground are they who, having heard the word, keep it in an honest and good heart, that it may bring forth fruit, some a hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty."

Some one has said: "All the parables of our Lord are beautiful. But two out of the number shine among the rest with great lustre —the Prodigal Son and

"THE GOOD SAMARITAN."

While Jesus was teaching the people, a certain lawyer stood up and began to question him, saying, "Master, what must I do to be saved?" Jesus answered by asking him, "What is written in the law? how readest thou?" The man, answering, said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." And Jesus said to him, "Thou hast answered rightly; this do, and thou shalt live." But the lawyer, wishing to excuse himself, said, "And who is my neighbour?" Jesus, in answer, spoke this parable: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, and wounded him, and

THE GOOD SAMARITAN.

went their way, leaving him lying on the road half dead. By chance there came down that way a certain

priest, who, when he saw him, passed by on the other side. Next came a Levite, who also looked on the wounded man, and passed by on the other side. In a short time a Samaritan, seated on his mule, came journeying along the road. When he saw the wounded man he had pity on him. He came off his beast, and stooping down, bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine in order to heal them, and he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow, as he was departing, he took out some money, which he gave to the keeper of the inn, and said to him, 'Take care of him, and what more thou mayest spend on him, when I come again I will repay thee.'" Then Jesus asked the lawyer, "Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among thieves?" And the lawyer answered, "He that showed kindness to him." Then said Jesus unto him, "Go, and do thou likewise." That is to say, Jesus taught him to copy the good Samaritan.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

There was a man who had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." And the father divided his living between them. Not many days after, the

younger son gathered together all that he had a right to, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted the money in wicked company. And when all was spent, a great famine arose in that land; and he began to be in want. Therefore he hired himself to a man of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have eaten the husks that were given to the swine for food; but he was not allowed. So he said to himself, "How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, while I am ready to perish here with hunger! I will arise, and go to my father." So he left that country to go to his father. While he was yet a good way off his father saw him, and had pity on him, and ran out to meet him, and put his arms round his neck and kissed him. Then the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." But his father said to the servants, "Bring the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry, for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." Now the elder son was out in the field, and as he drew near to the house he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things

meant. The servant said, "Thy brother has come; and thy father has killed the fatted calf, because he has come back safe and sound." And the elder brother was angry, and would not go in; therefore came his

RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON.

father out and asked him to come in. And he, answering, said to his father, "Lo, these many years have I served you, neither have I ever disobeyed your commands; and yet you never gave to me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends; but as soon as

this your son has come, who has wasted your money, you have killed for him the fatted calf." The father answered and said, "Son, you are ever with me, and all that I have is yours. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for your brother was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

In another parable, Jesus says, "Likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance."

Here is another story of repentance, not a parable, however, but something that actually happened in Jericho. There lived there a rich man, a publican or tax-gatherer named Zaccheus. While Jesus passed through the city Zaccheus tried to see him, but could not, by reason of the crowd of people, for he was a little man. So he ran on before, and climbed up into a tree by the wayside, that he might see Jesus as he passed that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and saw him, and being pleased with his zeal, said to him, "Zaccheus, make haste, and come down, for to-day I must stay at thy house." And he made haste and came down; and going gladly with Jesus, received him joyfully into his house. At this the people murmured, saying that Jesus was gone to be entertained by a sinner. Zaccheus stood and said

to Jesus, in the hearing of the people, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false means, I restore him four times as much." When Jesus saw how Zaccheus repented of his sins, he said to him, "This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come into the world to go among publicans and sinners—to seek and to save that which is lost."

This is all that Scripture tells us about Zaccheus. It would appear, from our Lord calling him "a son of Abraham," that he was a Jew. However that may be, he seems to have been a pattern to others. He gave half of his goods to the poor, whereas the Jewish law required only a fifth.

THE LAST SUPPER.

THE feast of the passover was drawing near. Jesus at this time knew that the hour was also near at hand when he should depart from this world to his Father. He and the twelve apostles were going to keep the feast together in their own way. In the evening Jesus came and sat with them at the table. Shortly after, he arose from the supper, and laid aside his garment, and took a towel and girded himself; after that he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded. When he came to wash Peter's feet, Peter said, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" Jesus said unto him, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know afterwards." Peter said, "Thou shalt never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me" (which means, he would not continue his disciple). Then Peter said, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my

hands and my head." Jesus said to him, "He that is already washed need only wash his feet; ye are clean, but not all" (for he knew who would betray him; therefore said he, "Ye are not all clean").

After he had washed their feet, and put on again

JESUS WASHING THE DISCIPLES' FEET.

the garment he had laid aside, and was set down again at the table, he said to the disciples, "Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord; and ye say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to

wash one another's feet; for I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you. The servant is not greater than his lord; neither is he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

As they ate the passover, Jesus said to them, "Truly I say unto you, One of you who eateth bread with me is against me, and shall betray me." At this the disciples were filled with sorrow, and looked from one to another, wondering of whom he spoke. Now there was leaning on Jesus' breast one of the disciples whom he loved. Peter therefore made a sign to him that he should ask Jesus of whom he spoke. Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I shall give a sop when I have dipped it in the dish." And when he had dipped the sop he gave it to Judas, otherwise called Iscariot, the son of Simon. Then Jesus said to him, "What thou art going to do, do quickly." The others at the table did not know what Jesus meant by these words. Then Judas went out from the house in which Jesus and the other disciples were. Then said Jesus to them, "I will be with you only a little while; but before I leave you I give a new commandment unto you—that you love one another; as I have loved you, so shall you all love one another. By this every one shall know that ye are my disciples, if you have love one to another."

And as they ate, Jesus took bread and blessed it, and broke it in pieces, and gave to his disciples, saying, "Take, eat, for this is my body" (this meant, that the broken bread was a type, image, or likeness of his body to be broken for them). Then he took some wine in a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank of it; and he said, "This is my blood, which is to be shed for others in forgiveness of their sins" (so that all who believed in him might have their sins forgiven). And as they sat at the table, Jesus told his disciples not to be troubled because he was to be taken from them. "Yet a little while I am with you," he said. "In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you. And if I prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also. For I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. Therefore, if ye love me, keep my commandments. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you."

THE END.

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